



Connecticut AIDS Resource Coalition

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Testimony Appropriations Committee

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Good afternoon Senator Harp, Representative Walker, members of the committee. My name is Shawn Lang and I'm the Director of Public Policy with the CT AIDS Resource Coalition and Co-chair of the AIDS LIFE Campaign, CT's statewide advocacy group.

Over the last 10 years, the number of people **living with HIV/AIDS has doubled to 10,574**. And funding has never come close to keeping pace.

CT ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation in the rate of people living with HIV/AIDS; 1<sup>st</sup> in AIDS cases among injecting drug users; 3<sup>rd</sup> in cases among women and Latinos. People of color and those who are otherwise marginalized and suffer the additional stigma of drug use are disproportionately affected. In the City of Hartford alone, 83% of those living with HIV/AIDS are people of color. 25% of people who are infected with HIV are unaware of their status. Because most people do not get tested for HIV on a routine basis, we're finding that the majority of those who are diagnosed with HIV receive an AIDS diagnoses within one year of the reported diagnosis of HIV. This means that we're increasingly dealing with a more medically and socially fragile population.

The face of the AIDS epidemic in CT is profoundly different than that of the rest of the country, and the Governor's proposed cuts to AIDS Services (which primarily funds prevention efforts) may contribute to further erosion of our HIV prevention efforts.

Over the nearly 30 years that HIV/AIDS has been a part of our lives, we have created a safety net in communities around the state, but it is a fragile and precarious safety net.

We are well aware of the fiscal crises in our state and are willing to shoulder our share of the burden facing you and the Governor in piecing together a thoughtful and balanced budget, but any deeper cuts would surely tear that safety net into shreds leaving thousands of people living with HIV/AIDS without life-saving services, and leaving communities without the much needed HIV prevention education.

We would also like to lend our support the Better Choices for Connecticut's revenue enhancement proposals.

I call on all of you once again, to stave off any deeper cuts to ensure that people with HIV/AIDS, families, poor people, the elderly and those with disabilities -- are not the ones on whose backs the budget is balanced.

Thank you for your time. I'm happy to answer any questions you might have.